

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE
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REIMAGINING GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND PUBLIC SAFETY FOR NEW YORK CITY

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I. INTRODUCTION: GUN VIOLENCE IN NEW YORK CITY

In each of our boroughs, whether in our homes or on our streets, in cars, parks, schools or on the subway, too many New Yorkers have been lost to the epidemic of gun violence, with one loss being one too many. While each loss is unique, the response too often skews the same: more law enforcement, a bigger surveillance state, and more carceral solutions. It's past time to reimagine and redefine public safety beyond simply law enforcement.

Pretending law enforcement alone can keep New York City safe is unfair, dangerous, and untrue. When we imagine safe neighborhoods, we do not imagine streets with fully-armed police officers on every corner. We imagine a neighborhood filled with trees, quality schools, small businesses, libraries, parks, reliable transportation, clean air, and everything families need to thrive. Law enforcement is a partner in co-producing public safety; it cannot and should not be responsible for replacing a torn and battered social safety net.

Gun violence is a national public health crisis. In New York City, as in cities across the country, it is real, it is deadly, and it is tearing apart our families and our neighborhoods. Gun violence in New York City is also preventable – and we know what works. After years of advocacy that saw years of loss, New York City implemented new and essential changes. Prior to the pandemic, the City was the safest it had been in decades.

New York City can and must build on strategies to promote and produce public safety that works. New York City began doing that on several fronts pre-pandemic. One example is Crisis Management Systems (CMS). CMS started as a pilot program and has since expanded and proven to be effective in reducing gun violence. Among other strategies, CMS uses violence interrupters to enter areas with high rates of violence, identify conflicts, and create strategies to reduce crime. From 2010 to 2019, CMS-managed areas saw a 40% drop in shootings.

Additionally, investing in youth development and out-of-school-time opportunities is essential to reducing gun violence. The City must ensure that youth programs, during the summer and school year, are funded at high levels. For instance, as a result of the pandemic and the economic hardships suffered by all, the City saw a substantial decrease in revenues in Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021. The previous mayoral administration chose to cut funding to organizations and programs doing the difficult, on-the-ground, community-level work that keeps us safe. Cuts were made to the Summer Youth Employment Program, which provides jobs and money to young New Yorkers and functions as one of the City's largest anti-violence initiatives.

In November of 2021, the not-for-profit organization NYC Speaks commenced work on a survey that was made available to the public from January 17th, 2022 to February 11th, 2022. In April 2022, NYC Speaks released the results of the 62,000 New Yorkers who took the survey.¹ The first question was “How can the City government

¹ <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/inside-city-hall/2022/04/07/survey-of-62-000-new-yorkers-reveals-policy-priorities>

make your neighborhood safer?”² The answer was telling for both youth and adult New Yorkers, whose top two answers dealt with affordable housing and proper mental health response.³ Not until the third response did respondents mention police.⁴ People inherently understand that public safety requires a comprehensive approach. Unfortunately, we often see more clarity and specifics around law enforcement than the other necessary components. It is understood that at the other end of a New Yorker’s 911 call is a human being who will respond. One of the best ways to support law enforcement is to stop asking them to do all things.

To that end the City should invest in creating and expanding initiatives centered on human justice. There are programs both in this city and nationwide that focus on restorative justice reform and concepts of healing to address the widespread harm caused to individuals, families, and communities from the systemic failures resulting in wrongful convictions. This model also considers the intersections of trauma that are affecting an individual, a family and a community.

Communities that suffer from the most violence are and have always been the ones with highest incarceration numbers and often must also deal with unacceptable rates of wrongful convictions that continue to have repercussions today.

Recently, on July 25th, 2022, the sixth defendant — Steven Lopez — in the 1989 Central Park Jogger case was exonerated 20 years after the Exonerated 5 (Yusef Saleem, Korey Wise, Raymond Santana, Kevin Richardson, and Antron McCray f/k/a the Central Park 5) were exonerated. The case against the five Harlemites — teenagers of color who were innocent of the 1989 sexual assault on a white woman but were convicted on the basis of false confessions that the police elicited — continues to impact the community of Harlem. The six innocent teenagers collectively served 45 years. The community as a whole continues to suffer from the institutionalized racism in the criminal legal system. At a Community Board 10 meeting held in 2021 to discuss the creation of an “Exonerated 5 Exhibit,” Harlem residents stated that for years in the aftermath of the 1989 Jogger Case, they did not allow their children to utilize Central Park for fear that their children would be profiled and arrested by the police.

Another recent example was in December of 2021, the individuals convicted in the murder of Civil Rights Leader Malcolm X — Muhammad Aziz and the late Khalil Islam — were exonerated 55 years later.

These are higher profile cases that represent what seems to be an all too common occurrence that also has a physical and emotional toll on everyone — individuals, families and communities. As a City, we should be a leader in the fight to create and uphold holistic and equitable approaches to fighting gun violence.

Each year, the number of shooting incidents peaks in the summer. In 2021, the deadliest month was August, followed by May. This year, again, we expect to see a dramatic rise in shootings during the warmer months. Instead of merely reacting after

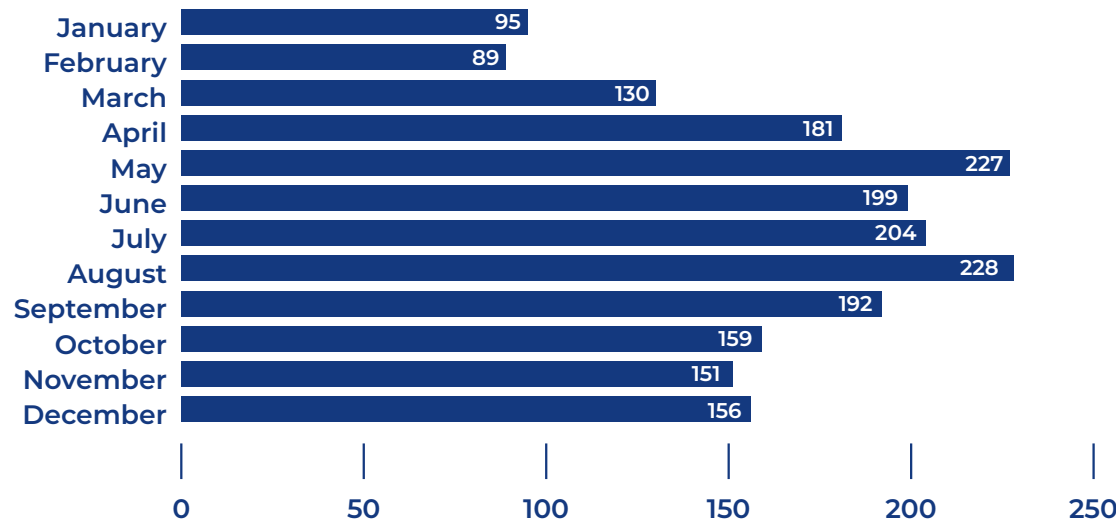
² <https://hraadvisors.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=eec57f0174fe4fb8b7c1f791531f0e27>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

shootings take place, our City should build and protect a comprehensive and strong social safety net to alleviate gun violence's root causes.

NEW YORK CITY SHOOTING INCIDENTS PER MONTH, 2021



Source: NYPD COMPStat, 2021 | Created by the Office of NYC Public Advocate

Contrary to headlines and hysteria, New York is still the safest big City in America.⁵ Moreover a recent article put in context that post pandemic violence is up around the globe. There have been increases of violence across the country. In the United States there have been increases of violence in Republican and Democratic led cities and states.⁶

The same article mentioned that “three quarters of New Yorkers said crime was a “very serious” problem in a February Quinnipiac University poll.⁷ That’s the highest number since the question was first asked in 1999, when the murder rate per capita was 50% higher. Back then, only 35% of respondents ranked violence as a major concern.” Meaning that New Yorkers’ perception does not align with reality. We also know that a sense of being safe is almost as important as actually being safe.

It would be remiss not to mention that while much of this report describes the demand of violence in our streets, what drives it and how we combat it at the root, understanding the supply is also very important. We must note that lax laws allow a repugnant amount of guns on our streets. Every illegal gun was legal at some point. Our elected officials, especially on the federal level, must act to slow the tide.

To be clear, none of this matters to a victim of crime or to their families. Their trauma and what happened to them is real, present and horrifying. They deserve and should receive justice. They also deserve a real plan that prevents it from happening again. We must be able to have space for it all. The conversation around truly providing comprehensive public safety is difficult when crime, especially violent crime, is going

5 <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-06-07/is-new-york-city-more-dangerous-than-rural-america>
6 <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2022-is-nyc-safe-crime-stat-reality/>
7 https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/nyc/nyc02092022_trends_nywx73.pdf

down. It's that much harder when it is increasing. New Yorkers have the right to be safe and feel safe. New York City can lead the way.

In New York City, gun violence is not an equal-opportunity killer. New Yorkers are significantly more likely to be involved in a shooting if they live in certain neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods are the same ones that lack the resources, services, and funding they need to truly thrive. For example, within Manhattan, the community of Harlem has the highest incidents of shootings, as well as the highest unemployment rates. The inequalities in the City are astounding; the life expectancy in Brownsville, a poorer neighborhood in eastern Brooklyn, is twenty years less than the life expectancy on the Upper East Side.⁸

None of this provides an excuse for the violence we are experiencing. There must be accountability and consequences for actions and behavior. It is also clear that overreliance on law enforcement and the legal system has also led to additional trauma to communities.

Violence compounds violence, and injury compounds injury. Communities already struggling with historic and unending disinvestment are also victims of overpolicing. In 1996, East New York reported one of the highest juvenile arrest rates, with 350 arrests in 1996.⁹ In 2021, the 75th precinct, which includes East New York, reported the highest number of juvenile arrests in the City, with 176 arrests.¹⁰ Despite twenty-five years, the communities who needed more than just additional police officers in 1996 must still ask for more in 2021. New York City can, and should, do better.

II. WHAT CAUSED AN INCREASE IN SHOOTINGS?

Gun violence is not random. The communities that face the highest number of gun violence are the same communities with the highest COVID-19 case numbers, the highest unemployment rates, and the biggest barriers to education. Vulnerable communities have had these issues in conjunction with high rates of gun violence for years if not decades. Our communities need and deserve resources beyond simply additional law enforcement to begin to break down these systemic barriers. Our City needs a holistic approach to public safety, and it needs to acknowledge the underlying problems that exist in these communities.

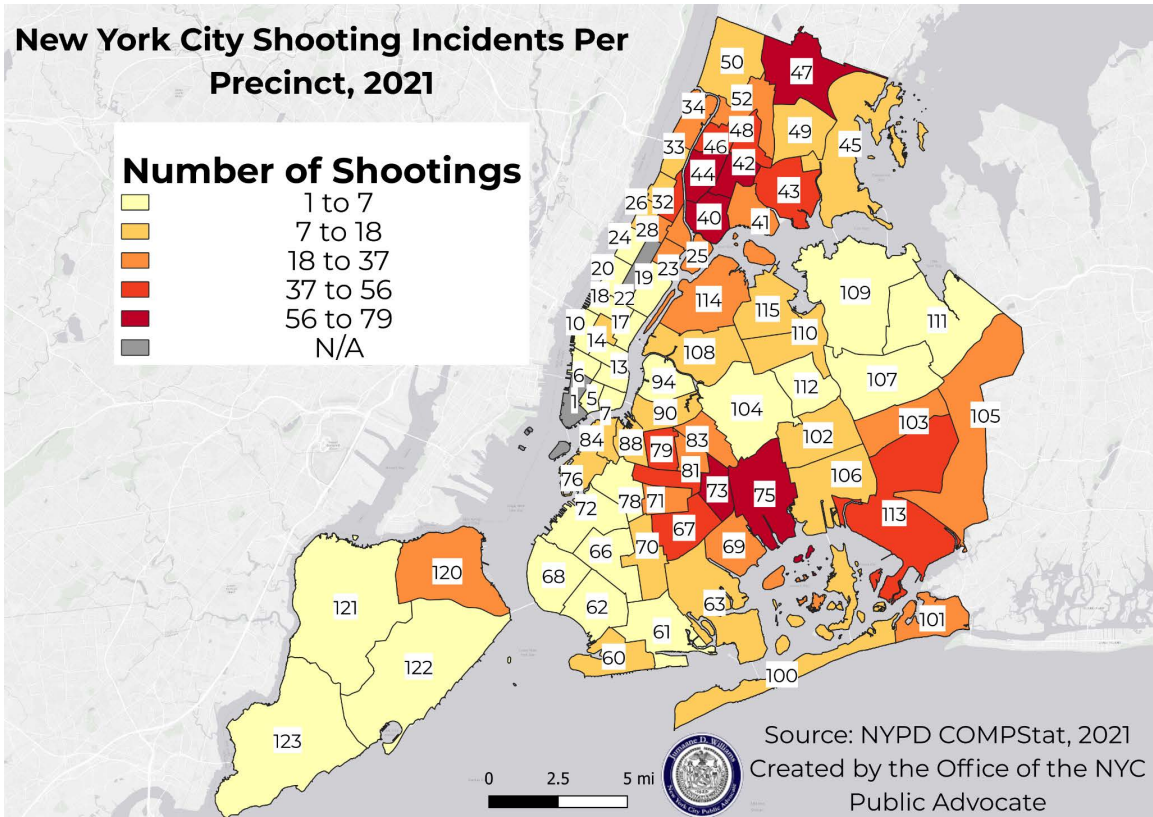
Gun violence is not an equal-opportunity epidemic; the majority of shootings are concentrated in just a few neighborhoods in Brooklyn and the Bronx. In 2021, there were 1,562 shooting incidents across New York City. While the average City precinct reported 11 shootings in 2021, the precinct with the highest number of shootings in 2021 reported over seven times more shooting incidents – the 73rd precinct had

⁸ Brooklyn Movement Center, *Invest in Black Futures*, https://issuu.com/bkmovement/docs/bmc_blackfuturesreport_v5, 14

⁹ Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, (New York: NYU Press), 97-98

¹⁰ Defined as arrests of individuals below; see City of New York, "NYPD Arrest Data (Year to Date)," accessed May 10, 2022, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Arrest-Data-Year-to-Date-/uip8-fykc>

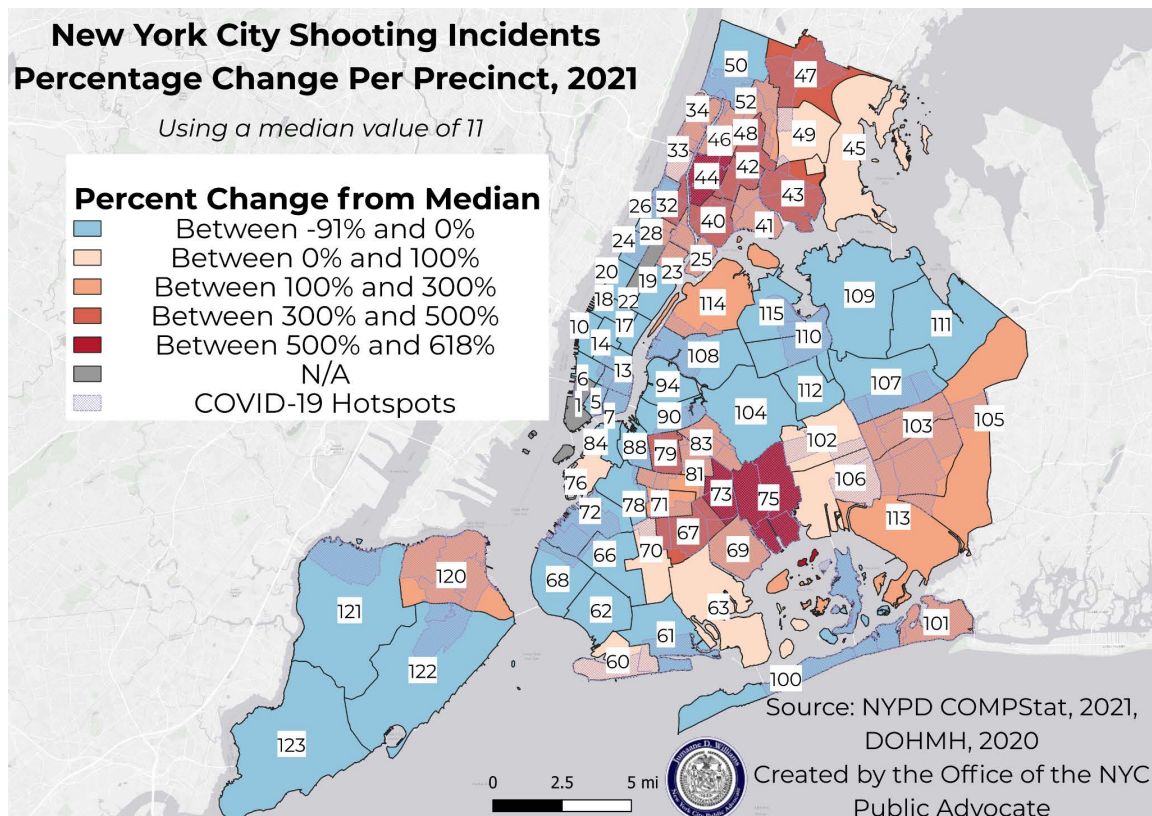
79 shootings, followed by the 75th Precinct, with 71 shootings. These two precincts lie next to each other in eastern Brooklyn, and include Brownsville, Ocean Hill, East New York, and Cypress Hills. In the southwest Bronx, the 44th Precinct reported 70 shooting incidents in 2021. Guns are killing New Yorkers across the City, but certain areas are bearing the brunt of the gun violence epidemic.



The neighborhoods facing the most shootings are also struggling with decades of disinvestment. While this was true before the COVID-19 pandemic, the past two years both magnified and deepened inequities between neighborhoods in New York City. In 2020, the City designated 74 zip codes as COVID-19 hotspots.¹¹ These zip codes experienced massive losses – deaths of loved ones, lost incomes, contracting long COVID – and these zip codes clearly overlap with the neighborhoods reporting the highest number of shootings. Specifically, of these 74 COVID-19 hotspot zip codes:

- 62 (84%) zip codes overlap with areas that report 100% more shootings than average
- 35 (47%) zip codes overlap with areas that report 300% more shootings than average
- 14 (19%) zip codes overlap with areas that report 500% more shootings than average

¹¹ City of New York, “NeON Summer 2020,” accessed April 27, 2022, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/neon/programs/covid-neighborhoods.page>



When the pandemic began, many New Yorkers lost their income – especially people already living paycheck-to-paycheck; the unemployment rate was so high in some parts of the City that more than 30% were jobless.¹² This was devastating. New York State’s unemployment insurance system crashed because of the overwhelming demand for assistance.¹³ Unfortunately, at the City level, the de Blasio administration cut government spending and continued decades-long policies of underfunding the communities who need it most. The City did not allocate enough resources to help its citizens recover from the crippling economic consequences of the pandemic, and many New Yorkers who were already struggling fell into deeper poverty.

Even now, New York City’s pandemic recovery is deeply unequal. By the end of 2021, the unemployment rate in New York City was 9.1%.¹⁴ Among non-Hispanic white New Yorkers it was 6.3%, but among Black New Yorkers it was 15.2% – more than twice as high.¹⁵ The unemployment rate has fallen steadily for the City as a whole – and for Asian, Hispanic, and white New Yorkers – but it has remained high the entire year for Black New Yorkers.¹⁶ In fact, the unemployment rate rose for Black New Yorkers in the last quarter of 2021 even when there was an across-the-board decline for every

¹² DEEP-MAPS, “Data,” accessed February 3, 2021, <https://deepmaps.io/data/>

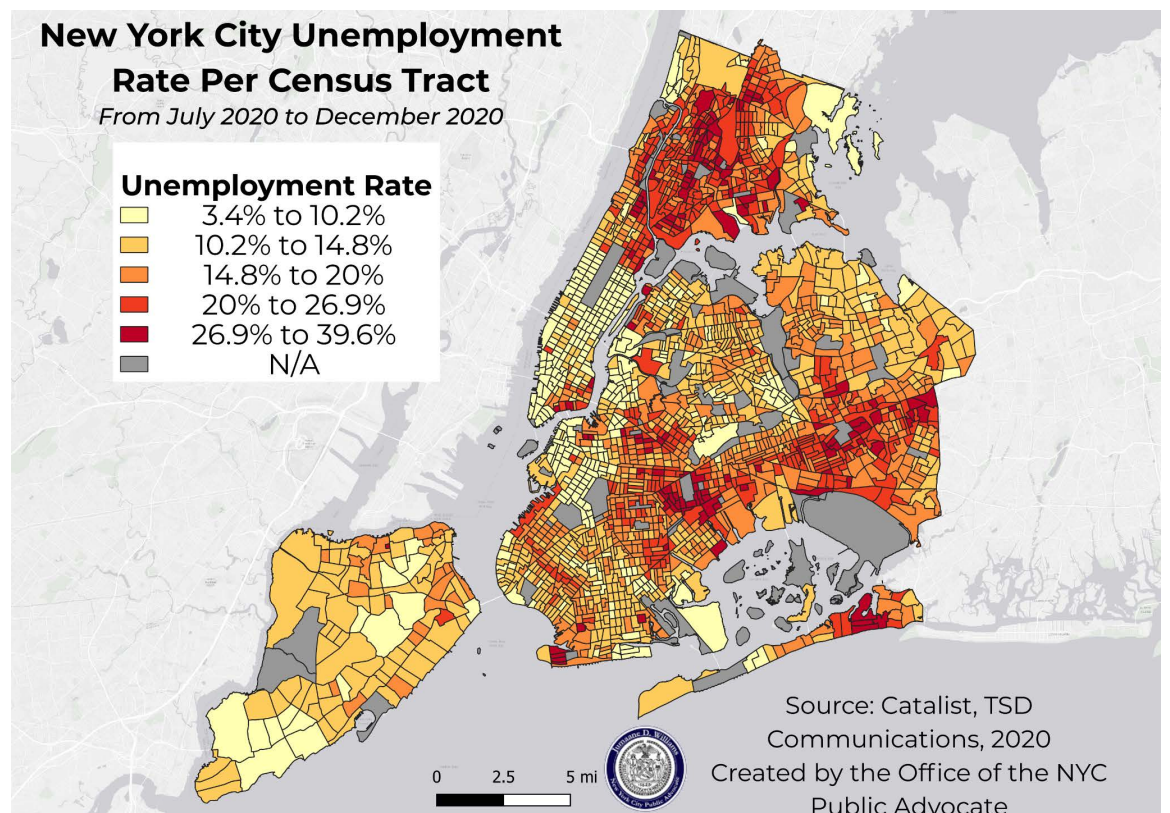
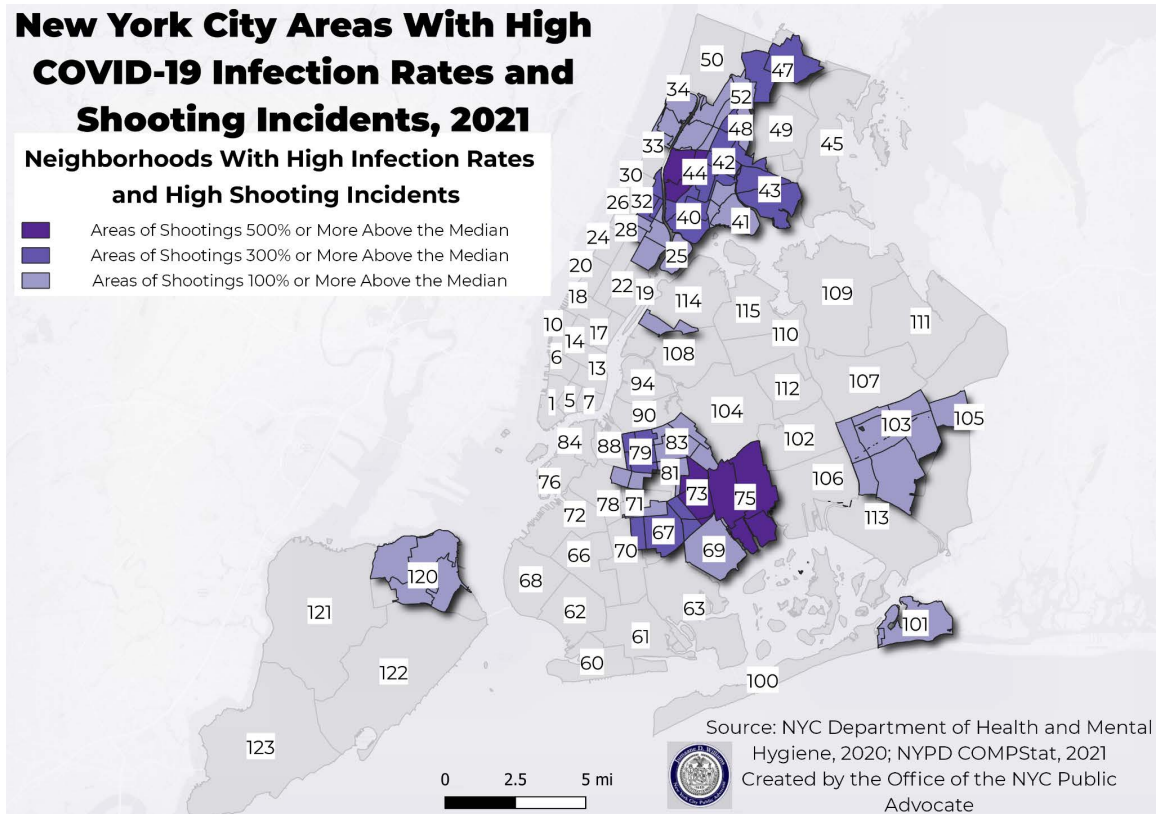
¹³ Cat Zakrzewski, “The Technology 202: State unemployment websites are crashing amid record number of claims,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-technology-202/2020/04/02/the-technology-202-state-unemployment-websites-are-crashing-amid-record-number-of-claims/5e84ee3e88e0fa101a758301/>

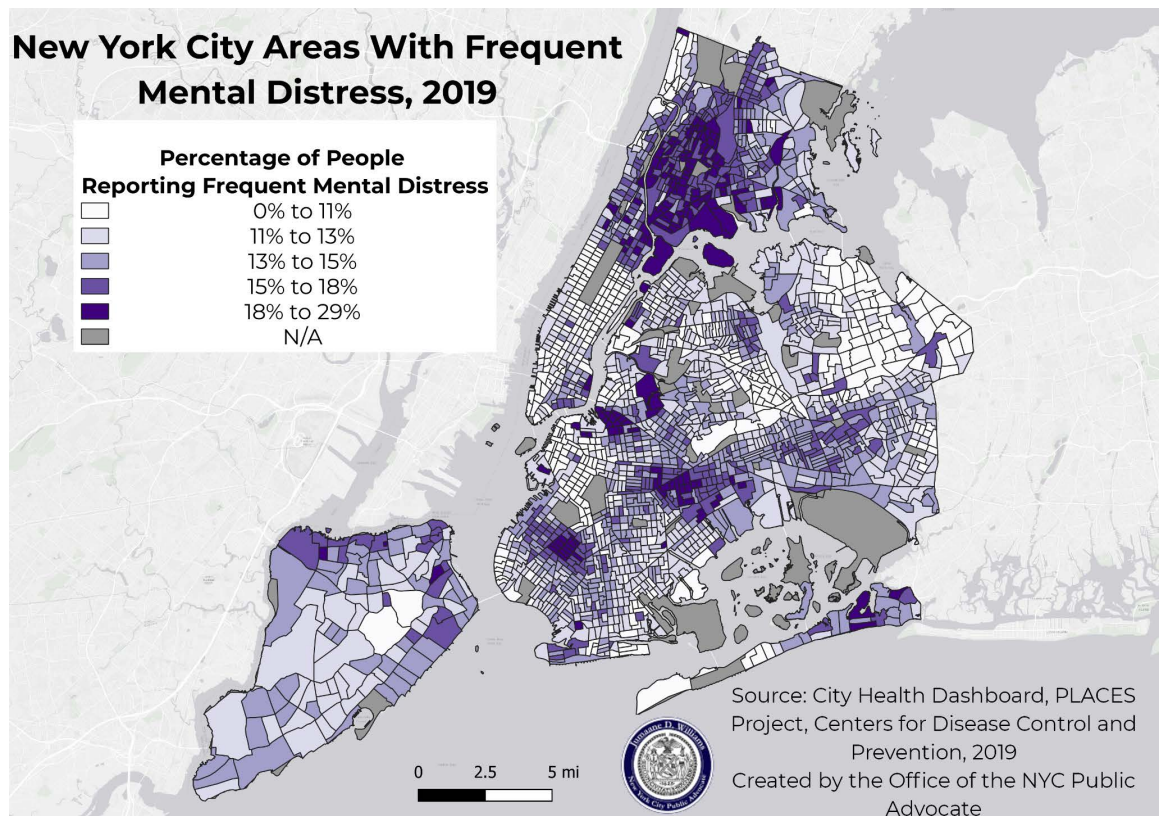
¹⁴ James Parrott, “New York City’s pandemic jobs deficit stood at 421,000 in December 2021; 15.2 percent Black unemployment in the fourth quarter,” Center for New York City Affairs, January 27, 2022, <https://www.centrernyc.org/reports-briefs/new-york-citys-pandemic-jobs-deficit-stood-at-421000-in-december-2021>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

other group.¹⁷ In the map above, it's again clear that many of the areas with higher unemployment are the same areas shown to struggle disproportionately from the pandemic and report higher numbers of shootings in the earlier maps.





The pandemic also decimated New Yorkers' mental health. By September 2020, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found 44% of people surveyed reported symptoms of anxiety related to the pandemic.¹⁸ As demand for mental health care soared, New Yorkers were not equally able to access it. Black, Hispanic, and AAPI New Yorkers, as well as those without health insurance, are significantly less likely to be able to access mental health care when they need it.¹⁹

While many New Yorkers were already struggling with mental health challenges, the pandemic drastically exacerbated what was already a crisis; before the pandemic, 8.5% of adults in the U.S. were depressed, but by 2021, 32.8% were depressed.²⁰ 8,600 children in New York City – or one in every 200 – lost a parent or caregiver due to COVID-19. Black, Latine, and Asian children were nearly three times more likely to lose a parent or caregiver to COVID compared to white children.²¹ Children who lose a parent young are at higher risk than their peers of trauma-related mental health issues in adulthood.

The neighborhoods with the highest poverty levels – many of the same neighborhoods with high case counts and unemployment – have more than twice as

¹⁸ Magas, I., Norman, C., Baxter, A., Harrison, M., "Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health in New York City. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, September 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/covid/covid-19-mental-health-impacts-hop.pdf>

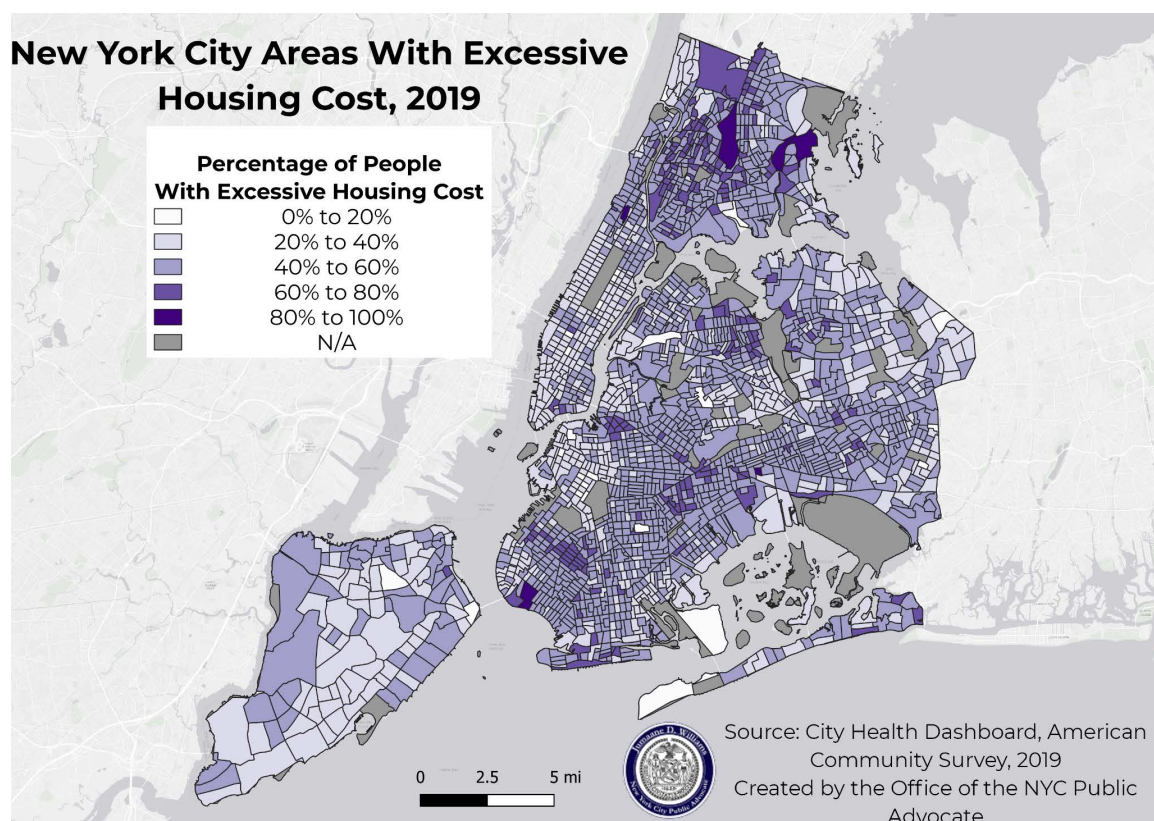
¹⁹ <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/dashboard/>

²⁰ Jillian McKoy, "This is how COVID-19 has affected mental health in the US," *World Economic Forum*, October 18, 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/10/depression-rates-us-covid-pandemic-america-mental-health/>

²¹ Fazil Khan, "1 in Every 200 NYC Children Have Lost a Parent or Caregiver to COVID. That's Almost Twice the National Rate." *The City*, April 20, 2022, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/4/20/23033998/1-in-every-200-children-nyc-lost-parent-covid-twice-national-rate>

many people hospitalized due to mental illness per capita than the neighborhoods with the lowest poverty levels.²²²³

Again, the communities that report the highest number of people experiencing frequent mental distress are also the communities with the highest number of shootings.



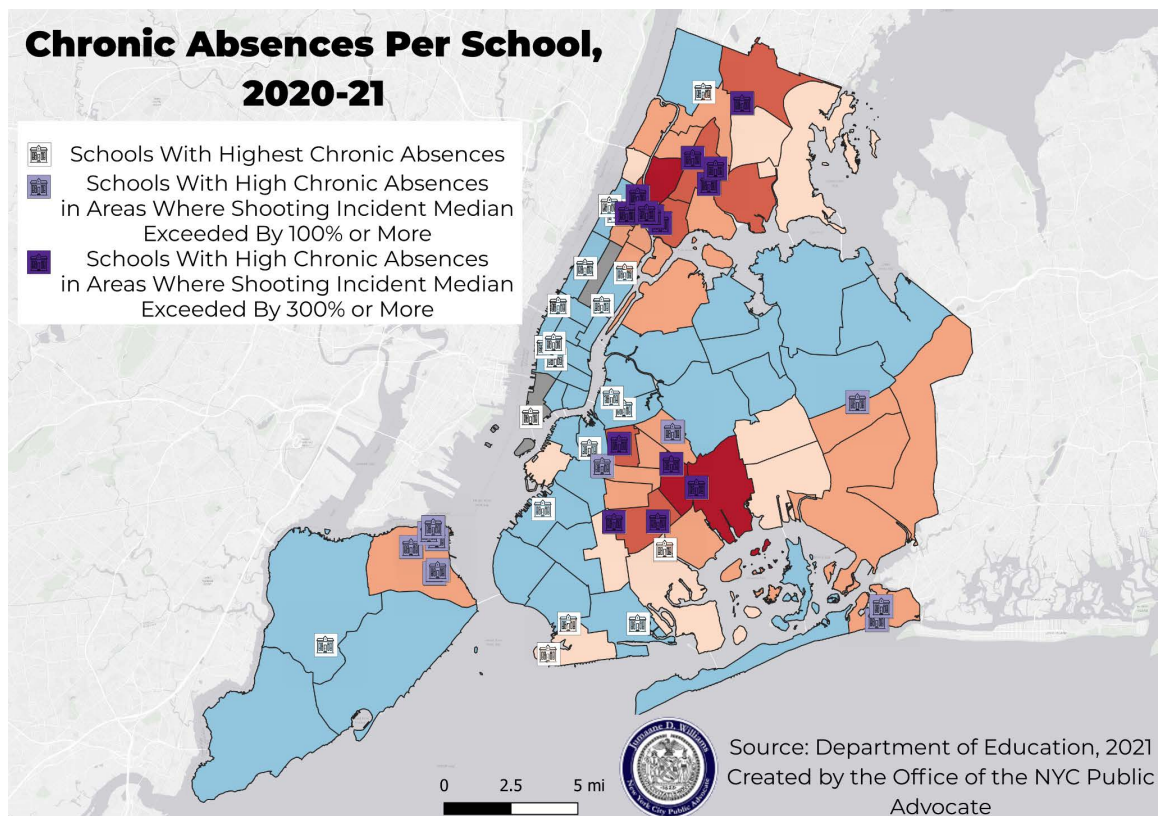
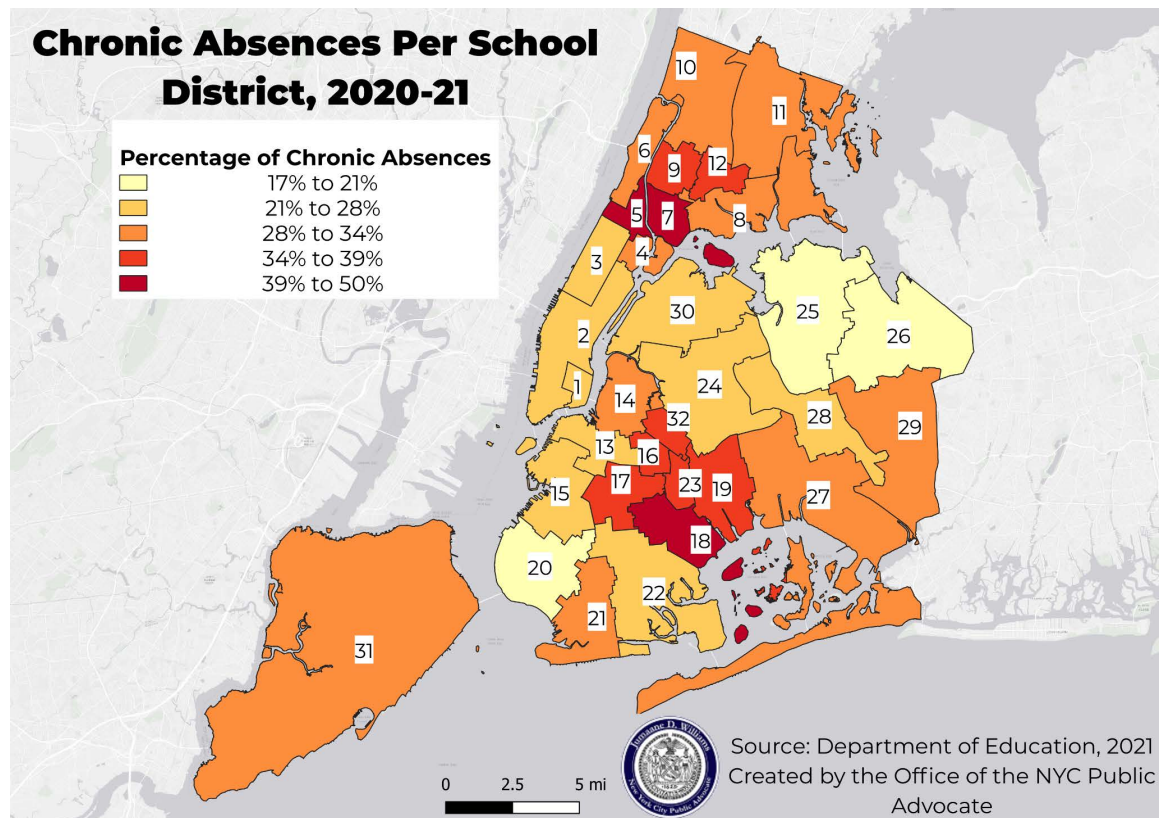
We cannot separate the housing crisis from violence on our streets. There are neighborhoods where 100% of households spend $\geq 30\%$ of their household income on housing costs²⁴. This is particularly acute in the Bronx, which faces the worst housing costs, the worst unemployment, the highest poverty rates, the most mental distress, and long-time underinvestment in the borough. Just recently, the Rent Guidelines Board voted to increase rents on the City's one million rent stabilized units by the highest percentage in almost a decade. This decision will lead to even more violence – be it eviction, homelessness, or poverty – as New Yorkers spend even more money just to remain housed.

New York City remains unprepared to adequately and systematically combat the housing crisis. For too long, the City has let rising housing costs and rampant housing discrimination grow almost unchecked. New Yorkers need access to programs and resources that help to reduce the financial burden of housing, and the City also needs to invest substantial resources into rapidly increasing the number of both regulated and unregulated housing units, but especially deeply affordable units, across the City.

²² <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/dashboard/>

²³ <https://www.icphusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Poverty.pdf>

²⁴ City Health Dashboard, "New York, NY - Metric Detail," accessed May 1, 2022, <https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/ny/new%20york/metric-detail?metric=12&metricYearRange=2019%2C+5+Year+Estimate&dataRange=city>



Finally, the neighborhoods with the most gun violence also have higher rates of chronic absenteeism. When schools closed and white-collar jobs went remote in March of 2020, Black and Latine students were disproportionately likely to have parents and

guardians who were unable to work from home.²⁵ Additionally, many of these students did not receive all the resources they needed to succeed academically like internet access, a functioning computer, space to be alone in their home, and ample time to dedicate to schoolwork. Based on the Department of Education's attendance data, significantly more students were absent from online school in some neighborhoods.

After chronic absences remained constant for four consecutive school years, it sharply rose to 29.7% for the 2020-21 school year compared to 25.1% the previous school year.²⁶ Among all school districts, District 75, a dedicated City-wide school district for students with disabilities, reported the highest percentage of chronically absent students at 54.8%. District 5, located in upper Manhattan, reported the second highest percentage with 50.4% of its students chronically absent. Again, the neighborhoods facing the most shootings are also the neighborhoods with the highest percentage of chronic absenteeism.

34 of the 50 New York City schools that reported the highest chronic absence percentages for the 2020-21 school year, or 68%, are also located within COVID-19 hotspots. These schools are in the epicenter of the epicenter. Students not only faced serious challenges at their schools, but were also at the highest risk of contracting the virus. Worse, 25, or 50%, of these schools are also concentrated in areas where shootings exceed 2021's median number of shootings by 100% or more. At least 28%, or 14 schools, exceed the same median by 300% or more. Clearly, more needs to be done to give educational opportunities to all New York City students. These issues and numbers aren't just overlapping; they're compounding. These issues are tangled and interdependent, and so the City's response must be as well.

Too often, the answer to the diverse and interconnected struggles these communities face is one and the same: more law enforcement. While law enforcement is certainly a partner in producing public safety, police officers do not prevent gun violence. Safe and affordable housing, accessible mental health care, ample green spaces, nutritious food, quality public education, good jobs, and strong communities prevent gun violence. It's clear from these maps that the communities suffering disproportionately from gun violence are also suffering disproportionately from chronic and continued underfunding in the resources and spaces that could keep us all safe.

Instead, City agencies other than the NYPD must do that essential work, and it's time to invest in them so they can co-produce public safety alongside law enforcement, elected officials, and community groups and leaders.

These are the maps of today, but we draw the maps of tomorrow. These maps are the result of policy choices made hundreds of years ago and then again every day since. We can, and should, make different ones – and build a more equitable New York City.

²⁵ Sarah Mervosh, "The Pandemic Hurt These Students the Most," New York Times, July 28, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/28/us/covid-schools-at-home-learning-study.html>

²⁶ <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Education/2016-17-2020-21-Citywide-End-of-Year-Attendance-and-sgsi-66kk>

SOLUTIONS

In order to properly address the problem – to connect and unravel all of these overlapping and compounding issues – we need to understand not only the root causes of gun violence, but what are not causes of gun violence.

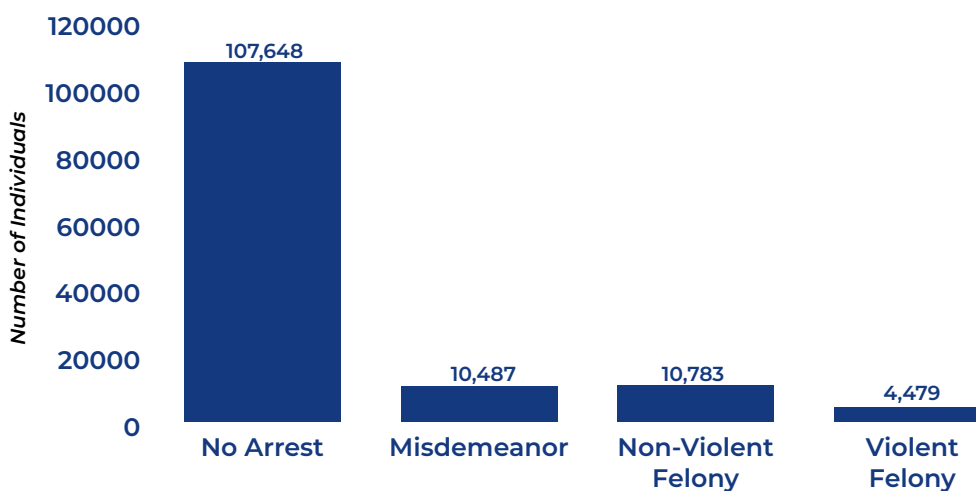
Is Bail Reform to Blame?

Every day, New Yorkers hear more about a supposed tie between the 2019 bail reform laws – passed after Kalief Browder died by suicide after spending three years on Rikers Island for charges that were ultimately dropped due to lack of evidence – and an increasing number of shootings. While the Mayor’s *Blueprint for Gun Violence* recommended that the laws be “fairer, smarter, and more targeted,”²⁷ the current administration has criticized the law and tied it to a decline in public safety.²⁸

The 2019 bail reform law did not cause New York’s recent increase in gun violence. While New York City has experienced an increase in violent crime, so have cities across the country; however, these other cities had no changes to their bail laws.²⁹ The Office of the New York City Comptroller released a comprehensive report this year on bail trends that found that defendants posted \$268 million in bail for 2021 compared to \$186 million in bail for 2020.³⁰ In addition, a 2021 report reviewed eleven localities and concluded that there was no connection between bail policies and an increase in crime.³¹

PRETRIAL RELEASE DATA IN NEW YORK CITY

From January 2020 to September 2021



Source: NYS Office of Court Administration, 2022 | Created by the Office of NYC Public Advocate

²⁷ The Office of the Mayor, “The Blueprint to End Gun Violence,” accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2022/the-blueprint-to-end-gun-violence.pdf>

²⁸ “NYPD Top Cop Wants to Walk Back Justice Reforms,” *The Crime Report*, March 14, 2022 <https://thecrimereport.org/2022/03/14/nypd-top-cop-wants-to-walk-back-justice-reforms/>

²⁹ Krystal Rodriguez, Michael Rempel, and Matt Watkins, “The Facts on Bail Reform and Crime in New York City,” Center for Court Innovation, February 2021, https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-02/Handout_Bail_Reform_Crime_02032021.pdf

³⁰ Office of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, “NYC Bail Trends Since 2019,” March 22, 2022, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-bail-trends-since-2019/>

³¹ Safety + Justice Challenge, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Crime, Arrests, and Jail Populations: An Expansion on the Preliminary Assessment,” July 2021, <https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Crime-Arrests-and-Jail-Populations-JFA-Institute.pdf>

The vast majority of New Yorkers on pretrial release are not re-arrested. Pretrial release data from the New York State Office of Court Administration found that from January 1st, 2020 to September 1st, 2021, 80%, or 107,648 people were not rearrested.³²

The United States is experiencing a real – and country-wide – increase in gun violence following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Blaming bail reform, a New York State-specific law, for a rise in local crime despite a country-wide surge in crime everywhere, is counter-productive and deeply misguided.

Is Speedy Trial and Discovery Reform To Blame?

Recently, detractors of 2019's bail reform package point to the aspect of discovery reform as a contributor to gun violence. "New York's discovery laws — which dictate the procedures for evidence-sharing between prosecution and defense during criminal proceedings — as well as its speedy trial laws, were amended in 2019. Up until then, New York's rules were among the nation's friendliest³³ to prosecutors, allowing prosecutors to withhold information until just before trial—with the consequence that defendants often felt pressured into pleading guilty³⁴ because they didn't know what evidence the prosecution had against them"³⁵

Critics of discovery reform have pointed toward the pre-trial release of individuals re-arrested for gun charges as a reason for the increase in gun-violence. However, advocates who supported 2019 discovery reforms note that 2020 discovery rollbacks actually expand the potential for prosecutors to pressure individuals into convictions without possessing evidence.³⁶ The 2020 changes to discovery laws also make it easier for prosecutors to withhold evidence, or claim that it has been lost or destroyed in the event that no evidence is available to proceed towards a conviction. Further, recent incidents exposing NYPD officers for fabricating evidence in gun-related arrests demonstrate the need for prosecutors to adhere to stricter requirements.³⁷ And we must remember that these laws were inspired by similar corruption that included a history of strategic false testimony performed by the NYPD.³⁸

Critics of the 2019 bail reform package have emphasized that discovery and speedy trial reforms compound to allow otherwise guilty individuals to be released on technicalities. Recently, the NYC Mayor's Office released statistics emphasizing a link between gun violence and bail reform citing that 80% of individuals arrested for a gun charge in 2022 were released according to NYS bail, speedy trial and discovery reforms. Mayor Adams noted that of the 1,921 individuals who were released after their arrest,

³² New York State Unified Court System, "Pretrial Release Data," accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www2.nycourts.gov/pretrial-release-data-33136>

³³ Schwartzapfel, Beth "Blindfold" Off: New York Overhauls Pretrial Evidence Rules, *The Marshall Project* April 2019

³⁴ Schwartzapfel, Beth "Undiscovered", *The Marshall Project*, August 2017

³⁵ Giraldi, Chris, "How New York Just Rolled Back Criminal Justice Reforms", *NY Focus Magazine* April 9, 2022

³⁶ Rodriguez, Krystal, "Discovery Reform In New York", *Center For Court Innovation*, June 2020 https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2020/Discovery_NYS_Revised_2020.pdf

³⁷ Annese, John "NYPD cop 're-enacted' finding gun to record it on bodycam: D.A." *NY Daily News*, May 25 2022

³⁸ Marcus, Josh 'New York judge tosses over 100 convictions tied to former NYPD detective accuse of lying' *Independent*

165 were re-arrested for a gun charge. While that number seems alarming, the rearrest rate only accounts for approximately 11% of the total number of people who were released from a previous gun arrest. These statistics only reinforce what we already know: most gun-violence in NYC is perpetuated by a small number of individuals, who are most likely victims of violence and may often engage in gun violence as a result of the environmental and economic stress factors noted earlier in the sections above.

III. HOW TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE IN 2022 AND BEYOND

A. SOLUTIONS THAT WORKED IN OTHER BIG CITIES

Gun violence is not exclusive to our City. Other municipalities have used innovative strategies to combat gun violence, and New York can learn from their successes. All of these cities have had varying levels of success here, and we look at the most impactful aspects of their programs, as well as newly implemented programs where we will continue to review the data and its impact as it becomes available.

Oakland, California

In 2012, Oakland, California, had a stark increase in gun violence rising to 126 homicides and 561 shootings.³⁹ The community demanded change, and Oakland created Ceasefire. Ceasefire is a program focused on narrowing the scope of law enforcement intervention and offering holistic services. By the end of its fifth year, homicides fell to 71. The program succeeded in reducing gun violence with an alternative approach and strategy that invested in the entire community instead of just law enforcement.

In all of the examples reviewed in this report, it is worth noting that nationally we have seen gun violence rising across all communities. So while gun violence eventually rose again in Oakland, it should not be interpreted as a failure of the Ceasefire program.⁴⁰ New York can learn from the program's focus on the small number of individuals involved in gun violence – notably only 400 individuals or .1% of Oakland's population – because this strategy resulted in a six-year decrease in homicides.⁴¹ The program is accredited “with a reduction in gun homicides in Oakland that is distinct from the trends in other comparison cities.”⁴² By recognizing gun violence as a systemic problem, Oakland was able to craft a program that completely redefined public safety and offered targeted support.

39 Mike McLively and Brittany Nieto, “A Case Study in Hope: Lessons from Oakland’s Remarkable Reduction in Gun Violence,” Gifford Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, April 2019, <https://giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Giffords-Law-Center-A-Case-Study-in-Hope.pdf>

40 Darwin BondGraham, “Gun violence: The other public health crisis that spiked in Oakland last year,” The Oaklandside, April 27, 2022, <https://oaklandside.org/2021/04/27/gun-violence-shootings-epidemic-public-health-crisis-oakland-2020-covid/>

41 McLively and Nieto, “A Case Study in Hope.”

42 Anthony Braga, Lisa Barao, Gregory Zimmerman, et al, “Oakland Ceasefire Evaluation: Final Report to the City of Oakland,” May 2019, 103, <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-Ceasefire-Evaluation-Final-Report-May-2019.pdf>

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., like other cities, faced a significant rise in shootings after the pandemic struck, with a 16-year high by the end of 2020.⁴³ Notably, the City found that around 500 individuals are responsible for between 60 to 70% of gun violence in D.C. These individuals have common risk factors such as: involvement in gangs, connection to a shooting within the past year, or a criminal justice history. The City recommended “a clear Citywide strategy that focuses intentional, structured, and intensive intervention efforts on those individuals identified as being at very high risk of being involved in gun violence.”⁴⁴ D.C.’s strategy does not primarily rely on law enforcement, but recognizes that the work needed to engage these specific individuals will take time, resources, and patience. Violence interrupters and messengers are able to use data to identify whom to engage and which efforts are needed. At the end of 2021, the District announced a dramatic expansion of violence interrupters in areas with the greatest need. It is important to note that this strategic plan was implemented in May 2022, so it is still fairly early to gather data on whether or not these new recommendations will work but it was such a focal point in their report that it had to be mentioned. The Office of the Public Advocate will continue to monitor any data that comes up as time goes by.

New York City has a list of people involved with gun violence – specifically a list of individuals who make up .009% of the City’s population – that should be carefully reviewed with credible messengers and violence interrupters.⁴⁵

Los Angeles, California

After decades of violence tied to gangs, Los Angeles created the Mayor’s Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) in July 2007.⁴⁶ GRYD focuses on and engages with youths to prevent them from joining a gang or reduce interactions within a gang. Intervention is layered upon community engagement with education campaigns, mediation, family-based services, gun buybacks, incident response programs, and more.⁴⁷ Since 2009, it has operated in certain GRYD zones. GRYD does not prioritize a police response, as it considers it a “suppression” tactic. While there is a limited role for the LAPD, the focus is creating programs to limit violence such as creating safe spaces for youths like City parks.

Past evaluation shows that this strategy is working in Los Angeles. Youths are engaged in the program and spending less time around gangs.⁴⁸ New York City, while

43 Peter Hermann, Dana Hedgpeth, and Justin Wm. Moyer, “Homicides in D.C. hit 16-year high; shootings also have spiked,” *Washington Post*, December 31, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/homicides-rise-washington/2020/12/31/59dd659e-3953-11eb-bc68-96af0daae728_story.html

44 “Washington, DC Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan,” National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, May 15, 2022, https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Washington-GVR-Report_V13_050622.pdf

45 Chip Brownlee and Ann Givens, “After years of gang list controversy, the NYPD has a new secret database. It’s focused on guns,” *Gothamist*, May 5, 2022, <https://gothamist.com/news/nypd-grip-list-guns>

46 City of Los Angeles, “Our Mission,” accessed May 23, 2022, <https://www.lagryd.org/>

47 Anne C. Tremblay, Denise C. Herz, Reginald Zachery, Molly Kraus, “The City of Los Angeles Mayor’s Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Comprehensive Strategy,” City of Los Angeles, June 2020, https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/sites/default/files/2020-08/GRYD%20Brief%201-GRYD%20Comprehensive%20Strategy_6.2020.pdf

48 Meagan Cahill, Jesse Jannetta, Emily Tiry, et al, “Evaluation of the Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Program,” Urban Institute, September 2015, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/77956/2000622-Evaluation-of-the-Los-Angeles-Gang-Reduction-and-Youth-Development-Program-Year-4-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

not having an identical structure to GRYD, already uses programs to identify certain zones requiring more programs and services to reduce gun violence. The City must increase investments in these programs and also review other municipalities like Los Angeles' GRYD to see what more can be done to reduce gun violence.

Newark, New Jersey

Newark's greatest strength is structural reform through interagency collaboration. When reforms began, the main goal was to produce compassionate solutions to violence that are led by those directly involved and impacted. In addition, a history of excessive use of force and inequitable representation in the police department compelled leaders to implement solutions that were proven to work in NYC. The establishment of a civilian complaint review board and the implementation of cure violence initiatives were two strategies already succeeding in NYC, which Newark built on those existing strategies.

The Mayor of Newark focused on building better relationships between community members and law enforcement. Newark worked very closely with grassroots groups to create a community-led violence response team. Newark Community Street Team's main goals are providing casework to those at greatest risk of becoming a victim, or perpetrator of violence, engaging in high-risk intervention, offering safe passage at contracted schools, and providing support to crime survivors who are overlooked by traditional victim services.⁴⁹ They work with City agencies, policy organizations, and service providers to ensure the quality of life for those living in Newark improves.⁵⁰

Not only are they interrelated with nonprofits and continue to have dialogue among City officials and City agencies, the structural body of specific departments is a key role to their success. Newark has a Public Safety Director that oversees both their police department and emergency services department. This helps consolidate people who are prepared for an emergency and know what to do if there is one.

Another important structural change prior to Mayor Baraka taking office were layoffs and a three year hiring freeze implemented to create diversity within the police department. According to *NJ Spotlight News*, "Newark's current population is about 50% Black, just as it was during the riots of 1967...that police department was 95% white...[after the hiring freeze ended]. Now the force is 21% white, 34% black and 44% Latino⁵¹". The Mayor also met with potential officers individually before authorizing employment. Newark's emergency service agencies meet daily to review CompStat data and then form targeted responses to enhance public safety. In addition, Newark assigns 5% of its total budget to community led-initiatives as a standard operating principal. These meetings also include other City agencies that must bring statistics they have gathered. They even include clergy who assist the operations of this department because they pull the best knowledge. As a result, Newark has lowered its homicide rate by 50% since 1990⁵². *NJ.com* reported that, "Newark Police officers

49 <https://www.newarkcommunitystreetteam.org/about-us/>

50 <https://www.newarkcommunitystreetteam.org/what-we-do/>

51 Shearn, Ian T. "Ras Baraka: Struggling to Rebuild the Police Force in Newark's Image" *NJ Spotlight News*, April 2020

52 Nielsen, Audrey "A Public Safety 'Ecosystem': Newark's Success Story" *The Crime Report*, July 15 2022

did not fire a single shot during the calendar year 2020, and the city didn't pay a single dime to settle police brutality cases. That's never happened, at least in the city's modern history. At the same time, crime is dropping, and police recovered almost 500 illegal guns from the street during the year."⁵³

New York City should follow Newark's steps of creating intentional, interagency collaboration when it comes to determining best practices and approaches to combat gun violence. In addition, we should explore how we can create diversity within the upper management of the NYPD, which has been historically⁵⁴, disproportionately White. With different City agencies involved in the conversation, there are more diverse experiences and data that can create a more extensive approach that covers all aspects of gun violence. It is crucial to gain different perspectives as well as engage those who are directly impacted and involved to create solutions. Our City should consider implementing a hiring freeze on the police department with a similar focus of changing cultural norms and ensuring only the best suited officers are retained. Creating a true interagency structure is also key.

Comparisons

As you can see from the chart below, New York is the largest major city with nearly 8.5 million residents, and the next closest in population, Los Angeles, has nearly 4 million residents. Meanwhile, New York City has substantially fewer gun violence incidents than Los Angeles despite a population more than double the size. Specifically, Los Angeles is encountering one gun violence incident for every 8,000 Los Angelenos while New York City had one gun violence incident for every 24,000 New Yorkers. Lastly, the Big Cities that we discussed above that are listed below whose gun violence incidents are lower than New York City, all have populations less than ½ million.

The chart below displays each city's population as of July 2021 and the total number of gun violence incidents (includes homicide, murder, unintentional shootings, and defensive use) that occurred in 2021:

CITY	POPULATION (as of July 2021)	TOTAL NUMBER OF GUN VIOLENCE INCIDENTS* (2021)	PER CAPITA (Incidents of Violence as compared to Population)
Oakland, California	433,823	119	1 in 3,646
Washington, D.C	670,050	214	1 in 3,131
Los Angeles, California	3,849,297	473	1 in 8,138
Newark, New Jersey	307,220	101	1 in 3,042
New York City, New York	8,467,513	353	1 in 23,987

* Source: United States Census Bureau and Gun Violence Archive, 2021
Created by: the Office of NYC Public Advocate

⁵³ Moran, Tom "Newark cops, with reform, didn't fire a single shot in 2020" *NJ.com*, January 11, 2021
⁵⁴ "Smith, Greg B. "Number of Black Patrol Cops Falls as NYPD Upper Ranks Remain Majority White", *The City* June 2020

B. CITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Redefining Public Safety 2.0

In January 2022, the Office of the Public Advocate released the revised [Redefining Public Safety platform](#). This platform is a roadmap for the first steps New York can take to reshape, expand, and improve public safety in all five boroughs and across the state.

Redefining Public Safety calls for these changes at the City level:

- Increasing paid opportunities for community members, such as expanding the Summer Youth Employment Program to undocumented New Yorkers
- Promoting and centering the Crisis Management System in the fight against gun violence
- Including community stakeholders in COMPStat meetings for additional interpretations of crime statistics
- Prioritizing access to mental health services, particularly in low-income communities experiencing gun violence

Redefining Public Safety also calls on law enforcement to partner with the community to co-produce public safety by focusing on gun trafficking, targeting high-profile traffickers, and encouraging District Attorneys to work with judges to reasonably and efficiently address gun cases in court. While *Redefining Public Safety* was unveiled months ago, many of its most critical recommendations have still not been implemented.

Job Security

The City must invest more in job opportunities, especially for younger New Yorkers. Providing paid opportunities to our youth works, as seen in Brooklyn's 61st Precinct, where providing stipends to young people led to positive changes.⁵⁵ Participation in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) also decreases young people's chances of being involved with the criminal justice system. In "The Effects of Youth Employment on Crime: Evidence from New York City Lotteries" researchers found that youth who participated in SYEP during the duration of the summer decreased their chance of being arrested by 17%, their chance of being arrested for a felony by 23%, and their chance of being convicted of committing a crime by 31%.⁵⁶ The researchers found that SYEP prevented about thirty-four arrests per thousand youth who participated in this summer program.⁵⁷ Clearly, New York City should pass legislation to support a year-round youth employment program.⁵⁸ In the FY 2023 budget, the NYC Council and Mayor have increased funding for a near universal SYEP program, a good step forward.

⁵⁵ Ashley Southall, "This Police Captain's Plan to Stop Gun Violence Uses More Than Handcuffs," *New York Times*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/04/nyregion/nypd-gun-violence-prevention.html>

⁵⁶ <https://www.nber.org/digest-202104/hyys-youth-summer-jobs-program-and-rate-criminal-activity#:~:text=Effects%20are%20still%20larger%20for,rate%20drops%20by%2038%20percent>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Intro. No. 0188-2022, New York City Council, (2022), <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5555464&GUID=A45CDCE5-3D55-4729-9433-5D915B6F77E6&Options=&Search=>

The administration should also create paid opportunities for community members to learn and apply skills related to social-emotional support and civic engagement, such as conflict de-escalation techniques.⁵⁹ Both the City and the state should evaluate violence reduction strategies that include fiscal components, such as cash incentives tied to skills training, therapeutic counseling, and other programs that assist low-income residents in need of immediate help. The City's budget must always reflect the need for these programs and prioritize jobs for youths.

Food Security and Environment

Gun violence is a public health issue. The Administration must radically increase access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious food across the City, and especially in food deserts. The City must also make investments in the physical environments of New York's neighborhoods, particularly those that experience extreme heat due to lack of tree canopy and other green space. Greening vacant lots, planting trees, cleaning up parks, expanding community gardens, and building a more environmentally resilient and beautiful City will make New York a better and less stressful place to live and raise a family. Communities, such as Brownsville, Brooklyn, have already begun to integrate holistic understandings of safety within their placemaking practices—engaging young people to map their levels of safety in different places within their neighborhood and launch creative placemaking projects to promote an overall safer neighborhood.

To accomplish this, the City should allocate at least one percent of next year's budget to the Department of Parks and Recreation. Currently, the department doesn't have the funds to clean up, support, staff, and operate effectively. Without enough funding, Parks and Recreation cannot provide equal services to the City, and there is a stark divide where low-income communities of more color have significantly fewer trees than the rest of the City.⁶⁰

The City must also expand food stamps access and secure TANF funds from the state so no New Yorker goes hungry. Chronic food insecurity is a critical issue within low-income communities, and sometimes SNAP benefits are inadequate.⁶¹

Housing Security

Housing is a human right. Planning, zoning, code enforcement, and other housing and land-use interventions are essential components to preventing gun violence.⁶² Having secure housing can reduce instances of harm, including gun violence. On July 29th 2022, the Office of the Public Advocate released a report authored by a coalition convened to look for solutions to [End Homelessness by the Year 2026](#). Looking at

⁵⁹ John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center, "Reducing Violence Without Police: A Review of Research Evidence," accessed April 29, 2022, <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2020/11/09/av2020/>

⁶⁰ Liz Donovan, "NYC Parks Get a Funding Boost Following Covid-Related Cuts," City Limits, July 7, 2021, <https://citylimits.org/2021/07/07/nyc-parks-get-a-funding-boost-following-covid-related-cuts/>.

⁶¹ Nieves C, Dannefer R, Zamula A, Sacks R, Ballesteros Gonzalez D, Zhao F. "Come with us for a week, for a month, and see how much food lasts for you:" A Qualitative Exploration of Food Insecurity in East Harlem, New York City. J Acad Nutr Diet. 2022 Mar;122(3):555-564. doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2021.08.100. Epub 2021 Aug 10. PMID: 34384908.

⁶² Christina Plerhoples Stacy, "Can Housing Policy Help Reduce Gun Violence?" Housing Matters, March 28, 2018, <https://housingmatters.urban.org/articles/can-housing-policy-help-reduce-gun-violence#:~:text=Vacant%20buildings%20have%20been%20shown,and%20slows%20home%20value%20appreciation.>

the root causes of homelessness and the issues with our current system, the report made concrete recommendations NYC can take to safely house New Yorkers and end homelessness. Within cities, gun violence is concentrated in a small set of disinvested neighborhoods, and, as seen earlier, many of the same neighborhoods struggle with excessive housing costs.

The Adams Administration must invest in an unprecedented strategy to expand homeownership; advocate for canceling rent for burdened New Yorkers; and create an abundance of regulated, unregulated, and deeply affordable housing. To keep people in the homes they have, the Adams Administration must also work in collaboration with the state to secure rent relief for over-burdened tenants; secure funds for access to counsel; and push Albany to pass Good Cause Eviction protections. In addition, both HPD and DOB need more inspectors to investigate housing violations, and HPD needs an additional \$10 million to build and staff supportive housing units for 18 to 24 year olds. The same should exist for LGBTQIA+ and TGNCNB youth, with \$17.1 million allocated for their housing needs.

Crisis Management Systems and Expanding Safety Alliance Pilot Programs

The Crisis Management System (CMS) is an invaluable and effective gun violence prevention resource. In 2021, the City doubled the number of violence interrupters working at CMS sites, but its \$100 million budget in Fiscal Year 2022 is miniscule compared to the \$11.2 billion budget for the NYPD. The City must drastically increase not only the number of CMS sites, but also their operational hours and organizational development.

This must also include the expansion of community-led safety efforts such as the Brooklyn Safety Alliance, which prioritizes a community-led response to violence in “hotspot” areas.⁶³ CMS cannot end gun violence alone, and crisis intervention also needs front-end prevention services and restorative justice approaches to be as effective as possible.⁶⁴ The Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice must also expand the Healing Justice program to \$40 million with \$1 million specifically allocated for each site that targets the 30 most impacted precincts in the City and \$4 million for Participatory Action Research integration.

Transform our Mental Health Response System

The City should fully invest in and develop an alternative non-police system for mental health-related calls. Police officers are simply not trained to handle mental health calls, and this office has repeatedly called for a non-911 dispatch line designed for non-emergency mental health situations.⁶⁵ This remains critical – especially as the City continues to send police to the majority of mental health calls despite the creation of the B-HEARD program.

⁶³ Yoav Gonen and Eileen Grench, “Part Two of Brownsville Police Pull-Back Program Shows Success Even in Warm Weather,” The City, June 16, 2021, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/6/16/22537746/part-two-of-brownsville-police-pull-back-program-shows-success-even-in-warm-weather>

⁶⁴ The International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association, accessed May 24, 2022, <https://www.cpted.net/>

⁶⁵ Office of the New York City Public Advocate, “Improving New York City’s Responses to Individuals In Mental Health Crisis,” <https://advocate.nyc.gov/static/assets/OPA%20EDP%20REPORT%202019.pdf>

It's imperative that the Adams Administration create an alternative three-digit non-police number for people to call regarding mental health crises. The reality is that the existing structures favor the police as the institution to handle mental health calls, and those interactions can often turn deadly.⁶⁶ Emergency dispatchers need to know which calls require the police, and that requires training and a reimagining of existing emergency response systems. To accomplish this, the City needs to invest \$26 million for 18 new teams as well as increase NYC Well resources by 50%. In addition, there needs to be \$20 million for four new Support and Connection Centers.

In addition, this office recommends the City Council pass legislation proposed by the Public Advocate:

- [Intro 0085-2022](#) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to establishing a commission to study and make recommendations regarding the root causes of violence in the City.
- [Intro 0187-2022](#) - A Local Law in relation to creating an interagency task force to be charged with studying the obstacles faced by children of incarcerated parents, from arrest to reunification.
- [Intro 0188-2022](#) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to creating a youth employment education program.
- [Intro 0416-2022](#) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to establishing an emergency student food plan.
- [Res 0093-2022](#) - Resolution recognizing June as Gun Violence Awareness Month in New York City.

The Council must also pass the following legislation to invest critical resources in our communities, including:

- [Intro 0153-2022](#) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to establishing a domestic violence survivor housing stability program.
- [Intro 0154-2022](#) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to requiring the office to end domestic and gender-based violence to create an online services portal and guide
- [Intro 0276-2022](#) - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to de-escalation and trauma-informed training for department of homeless services employees

C. STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

The state government must address gun violence in a unified effort and require municipalities to create a public safety plan. The state's decision to create an Interstate

⁶⁶ Garrison Lovely, "Cop Shooting Highlights Slow Start for City Effort to Remove Police from 911 Mental Health Emergencies," *New York Focus*, February 4, 2022, <https://www.nysfocus.com/2022/02/04/cop-shooting-highlights-slow-start-for-city-effort-to-remove-police-from-911-mental-health-emergencies/>.

Gun Tracing Consortium, alongside tripling investment in community-based programs to curb gun violence, are solid first steps, but more must be done. The Office of the Public Advocate wants the State of New York to invest one billion dollars statewide to gun violence prevention, victims' services programs, and youth programming. It is important that we start funding these programs in order for us to have safe communities. We call upon the New York State Legislature to pass the following bills as part of the Redefining Public Safety platform:

- [S7198](#) (Jackson)/[A5197](#) (Nolan), or The Judith S. Kaye Safe and Supportive Schools Act, to address the school-to-prison pipeline
- [S7573](#) (Myrie)/[A8619](#) (Meeks), which expands eligibility for victims and survivors of crime to access victim compensation funds by removing the mandatory law enforcement reporting requirement and providing alternative forms of evidence that would show that a qualifying crime was committed.
- [S1083](#) (Gournardes)/[A2318](#) (Simon), which establishes a center for firearm violence research in New York State
- [S2881](#) (Ramos)/[A8524](#) (Forrest), which will ensure that New Yorkers with substance use disorders, mental health concerns, and other disabilities have an off-ramp from the criminal legal system to obtain treatment and support in their communities.

D. FEDERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Congress must play a central role in reducing the number of guns coming into New York City. Nearly two-thirds of guns used in crimes in the state are bought outside of New York.⁶⁷ The weapon used in the horrific train shooting in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, on April 12th, 2022 was bought in Ohio.⁶⁸ This happens far too frequently. All of the weapons used illegally on our streets were legal at some point. 77% of mass shooters from 1966 to 2019 in the U.S. used legally-purchased weapons in these shootings.⁶⁹ We need law enforcement and interagency cooperation to deal with this iron pipeline of guns. There is clearly a cycle of supply and demand that is taking place. The supply is guns and the federal government needs to pass gun control measures that will have a meaningful impact and curtail the interstate travel of guns. They have the responsibility to reduce the supply while determining what is causing the demand for gun violence.

The Office of the Public Advocate calls upon the Federal Legislature to pass the following bills:

⁶⁷ David Yassky, "Taking Aim at Gun Violence: We Need Action from All 3 Levels of Government," opinion, *Gotham Gazette*, April 22, 2022, <https://www.gothamgazette.com/130-opinion/130-opinion/11256-taking-gun-violence-government-action>.

⁶⁸ Brynn Gingras, Shimon Prokupecz, Pervaiz Shallwani, et al, "Suspect in Brooklyn subway train shooting called in the tip that led to his arrest, sources say," *CNN*, April 13, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/13/us/brooklyn-subway-shooting-wednesday/index.html>.

⁶⁹ National Institute of Justice, "Public Mass Shootings: Database Amasses Details of a Half Century of U.S. Mass Shootings with Firearms, Generating Psychosocial Histories," February 3, 2022, [nij.ojp.gov: https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings](https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings)

- [H.R.8](#) (Thompson), establishes new background check requirements for firearm transfers between private parties (i.e., unlicensed individuals).
- [H.R.1446](#) (Clyburn), revises background check requirements applicable to proposed firearm transfers from a federal firearms licensee (e.g., a licensed gun dealer) to an unlicensed person. It increases the amount of time from 3 business days to a minimum of 10 business days. Increasing the number of days will ensure that a background check was completed prior to transferring a firearm to an unlicensed person.
- [H.R. 4118](#) (Horsford), establishes federal grant programs and related entities to support violence intervention initiatives.
- [H.R.1560](#) (Evans), establishes the Advisory Council to Support Victims of Gun Violence. Among other things, the advisory council must assess the needs of victims of gun violence and disseminate information about helpful resources.
- [H.R.7910](#) (Nadler), makes various changes to federal firearms laws, including to establish new criminal offenses, to expand the types of weapons and devices that are subject to regulation, and establishes a framework to regulate the storage of firearms on residential premises at the federal, state, and tribal levels.
- [H.R.1008](#) (Maloney), establishes a framework to regulate handguns as consumer products. It establishes two general requirements: (1) new domestically manufactured handguns must be personalized handguns, and (2) handguns distributed in commerce must be personalized handguns or retrofitted personalized handguns. A personalized handgun allows only an authorized user to fire the handgun.

Congress must establish universal background checks, strengthen interstate trafficking initiatives, and target networks flooding communities with guns. Guns are being transported into states with strong gun laws from states with weaker gun laws, yet there is no federal law specifically targeting gun trafficking. Equitable legislation must be enacted to address gun trafficking, and the federal government should focus law enforcement attention on the sources of guns rather than the possessors of guns. This would reduce the flow of weapons into susceptible neighborhoods. We must hold all networks accountable to the law for flooding communities with guns while ensuring that laws do not lead to mass incarceration of impacted communities, and maintaining oversight on the discretion of law enforcement during its implementation. Gun violence doesn't just kill in New York City, but everywhere; the federal government can take steps imminently to save lives.

In the wake of recent high-profile and horrifying shootings, the federal government is finally taking some steps to address gun violence in the United States. We cannot let this moment pass us by, and we must take concrete steps to fight mass shootings as well as community violence. This is a solid first step, but much more needs to be done.

IV. CONCLUSION

On January 1st, 2022, Eric Adams became the 110th Mayor of the City of New York. As previously mentioned in the introduction, NYC Speaks, an independent initiative funded by the not-for-profit Goodnation Foundation, was completing its six month survey of 62,000 New Yorkers.⁷⁰ The survey was to inform Mayor Adams as to New Yorkers' priorities and the policies that his administration should tackle in its' first 100 days.⁷¹

It's important to note that regarding the question of "How can City government make your neighborhood more safer" that New Yorkers want more resources for housing and mental health.⁷² The top three responses were:

1. 44.8% of New Yorkers choose "build more affordable housing and reduce homelessness";⁷³
2. 36.9% of New Yorkers choose "sending mental health responders to a mental health crisis in lieu of police officers";⁷⁴
3. 34.4% of New Yorkers choose "increase the number and presence of police officers".⁷⁵

This is a critical time for New York City. As we continue to manage COVID-19, we are equally managing a rise in gun violence. Our City, like many others, too often decides to send police officers as the only solution. Officers are not equipped to deal with problems such as lack of access to education, serious mental distress, and unemployment. Our City is able to address these issues. By redefining public safety, we can redefine our solutions to curb violence across communities. One proactive and important action the Mayor has taken to date is to convene a Gun Violence Task Force,⁷⁶ to which he has appointed the Public Advocate as a member.

This report outlines what is happening in New York City and in communities of more color. It is there that we are seeing the highest level of gun violence coupled with lack of programs and chronic disinvestment. Our work must begin with sufficient investment in disinvested communities, holistic non-police programs, addressing insecurity across various issues, and determining the right amount of investment for New York City in our annual budget. Future budgets will be the perfect opportunity to correct what has been a long-standing problem of putting too much in policing and too little in communities. We need to identify the root before identifying the problem. We all need to work together to determine the best ways to stop our summers, and our communities, from being hotbeds of gun violence. Redefining public safety is the right way to begin that work.

⁷⁰ <https://nycspeaks.org/data/>

⁷¹ <https://www.nyl.com/nyc/all-boroughs/inside-city-hall/2022/04/07/survey-of-62-000-new-yorkers-reveals-policy-priorities>

⁷² <https://hraadvisors.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=eec57f0174fe4fb8b7c1f791531f0e27>

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ <https://www.nyl.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2022/06/03/mayor-adams-forms-a-gun-violence-task-force---and-defends-his-pick-to-lead-it>

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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